

News-Review

ENVIRONMENT

Grants awarded to three watershed projects in Little Traverse Bay region

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Recently, three community projects were awarded grants from the Petoskey-Harbor Springs Area Community Foundation's Little Traverse Bay Protection and Restoration Fund totaling \$57,250. Each project will benefit Little Traverse Bay and its watershed.

The recipients of the grants are Melrose Township, Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council and Walloon Lake Association and Conservancy.

For Melrose Township, the \$14,750 grant will support the design and installation of a rain garden at the Third Street road end in Walloon Lake Village in order to improve storm water management. The project could be replicated at other road ends around Walloon Lake. Work on the project is expected to start this summer.

"Rather than just do the standard, basic road enhancement, we have asked for the funding to help implement additional things that you normally don't do with a standard growth," Melrose Township Clerk Robin Hissong Berry said. "With this grant, we're looking for recommendations of how to maybe do wildflowers and native plants and things that will help keep the storm water down."

Storm water runoff will also be the focus for Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council's project to research and identify potential policy options to help local governments manage storm water runoff using the \$22,500 grant. The project will gauge interest in more storm water solution projects by working closely with local officials at the county, municipal and township levels.

According to Jen Buchanan, associate director of Tip of the Mitt, the project is expected to take about a year and a half, which is within the 20-month timeframe set by the grant.

"It's going to really help us focus our attention on the matter," Buchanan said. "It has been something we've been doing somewhat piecemeal. This way we feel like the support is going to allow us to do it in a much more comprehensive way, instead of just kind of picking away

at things. Everybody's going to be hearing the same message and hopefully getting the same result in the end. So without the support, we would have continued as best we could, but this is really going to give us an opportunity to see it through the way it should be.”

Storm water runoff carries pollutants from the ground into storm drains where it is not treated, Buchanan said. It then goes into the Bear River or Little Traverse Bay, bringing bacteria, oil, grease and toxins into waterways.

The Walloon Lake Association and Conservancy will put the \$20,000 grant it received towards addressing aquatic invasive species in Walloon Lake by installing a permanent boat wash station at Jones Landing launch site. This is the first station in a plan to install several around the lake.

The conservancy is in the process of developing site plans and hopes to break ground in spring or summer.

According to Walloon Lake Association and Conservancy Executive Director Josephine Roberts, boat washing is extremely important for preventing invasive species from entering Walloon Lake.

“Once you have an aquatic invasive species in a body of water, you can't really get rid of it, you can only control it,” Roberts said. “So we want to prevent other invasives that are coming up from downstate or in other places from entering Walloon Lake.”

Currently the lake is home to only one invasive species, the Eurasian watermilfoil, an aquatic plant considered to be highly invasive. Roberts said it is manageable through treatment, however any more invasive species could create trouble in the future.

“(The grant will) enable us to get the boat wash actually built and hopefully get other supporters to join the cause in terms of putting boat wash stations around Walloon Lake, Lake Charlevoix and other places,” Roberts said. “I think it sheds, most importantly, a big spotlight on the need to stop aquatic invasive species from entering our inland lakes in Northern Michigan.”